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Jacksonville District

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS INITIATES A PULSE RELEASE FROM LAKE OKEECHOBEE

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, will modify its current pattern of low level freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee at 7 a.m. tomorrow, Jan. 20. The current constant rate release of 650 cubic feet per second (cfs) through the W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam (S-79) to the Caloosahatchee Estuary will end and a seven-day pulse release will begin. The current no-flow to the St. Lucie Estuary through S-80 will remain in place.

“This is going to better-balance the needs of Lake Okeechobee and the coastal estuaries. Our decision to move to a pulse release was made after Corps water managers received input from state and local government technical staff. The more scientific information we have, the better decisions we can make,” said Col. Paul Grosskruger, commander, Jacksonville District.

This type of release is expected to benefit the ecology of the upper estuary because pulsing water releases can promote mixing of salinity levels and nutrient concentrations from one water level to another.

A pulse-type release more closely resembles the naturally occurring pattern of runoff caused by rain, which normally leads to an increase in runoff as rain continues to fall and is followed by a gradual decrease in runoff. Corps water managers will work to achieve both the pulse variation in flow through the S-79 as well as keeping an average low level 650 cfs rate over the seven-day period. The target rate of flow for the first day is 1,000 cfs, the second day's target is 1,350 cfs; the third-day target is 600 cfs, and the target for the remaining four days is 400 cfs.



Conditions within the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary will be closely monitored by state and local scientists. The information collected may lead to a better understanding of the effect that different patterns of freshwater releases have on this sensitive ecosystem.

Today, the lake level is 13.64 feet NGVD. One of the most significant benefits of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (2008 LORS) is that it allows flexibility for water management decision-makers. While the lake is at this level, the 2008 LORS releases may be made up to 450 cfs and 200 cfs to the Caloosahatchee and St Lucie, respectively. The 2008 LORS also allows these releases to be redistributed east and west, however, to minimize impacts or provide additional benefits.

For further information, please call the Jacksonville District Corporate Communication Office at 904-232-1953 or (cell) 904-704-6870.

Water level data and flows for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project can be found on the Jacksonville District's water management page at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Engineering/Branches/WaterResources/WaterMgt/index.htm>.